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Sermon from the Epistle for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GAL. 5, 26—6, 10.

Agriculture was one of the leading pursuits of men in the early days of the world, and hence Scripture often alludes to the work of husbandmen to illustrate spiritual ideas. St. Paul compares the *work* of the ministry to that of a farmer, saying: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. . . . We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." And the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the *fruits* of this spiritual cultivation, when it says: "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

There is a divine law of retaliation and compensation also in the spiritual realm, and Paul expresses it in our text, thus: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This law applies to the ungodly; for Job relates: "I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." This statement may be accepted as the divine verdict of condemnation on the popular saying, that you must allow a person, especially a young person, to sow his wild oats. Scripture warns against this very idea, saying: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity;" again: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

The law of Paul, however, applies also to the godly. The Wise Man says: "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward;" and Hosea: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy;" and James: "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." The Preacher urges that this sowing be incessant, saying: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper,

either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." From early infancy to old age a child of God should be employed in this work.

It is, therefore, no new parable which St. Paul introduces in our text, when he says: "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." When we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, every man shall receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. However, St. Paul turns this parable to good account in our text by pointing out a number of important details. He speaks of

SOWING TO THE SPIRIT,

and points out,

1. *On what lines it should proceed;*
2. *What a serious work it is.*

1.

To sow properly, a person must know the heart. He must inform himself what *is* in it, and what *ought to be* in it. You remember what a long catalogue of weeds in the unregenerate heart the apostle recited in the Epistle lesson for last Sunday; to-day he suggests a way to remove them. In the first place, he says: "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." And he adds force to these words, when in connection with the next warning he says: "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." Vainglory, ambition, jealous striving, self-assertion, the pushing forward of our personal interests, with a disregard of the rights and needs of others,—these are characteristics of the worldly mind. Look out for yourself! is the ruling motto of the world. In our day such bald selfishness is being proclaimed as this, that only the fittest have a right to live, and may crush out the others. And those are regarded the fittest who possess power in whatever form. The rich override the poor, the well-educated the unlettered, the shrewd the simple: one merchant is against another, laborer against laborer, and even preacher against preacher. Every one strives to mount higher, and uses his fellowmen as stepping-stones for his ambition. The result is an endless provocation and envying which fills every department of the world's activity, and keeps mankind in a perpetual uproar of unrest.

Many a precious gift of God is corrupted in this wild struggle. There is certainly worth in wealth, in learning, in a good education, in a high social position. These endowments and blessings are

goodly to behold, but when they are coveted for selfish ends and applied to selfish uses, their beauty is like the beauty of the hawthorn blossom: it perishes in a few days, to form the bitter stinging haw, which repels as effectually as the blossom attracted. Now the hawthorn cannot change its kind; but the vain heart of man can be grafted by the Heavenly Gardener. He grafts the newly converted soul upon Christ; He leaves intact all the good gifts which the Creator has bestowed upon man, but fills the regenerate with humility as with a new life-giving sap. He prunes the wild shoots of worldly ambition, and engenders in them a nobler ambition, which "looks not on a person's own things, but also on the things of others." The result of this sowing to the Spirit is, that petty quarrels cease, each yielding in kindness to the other, and more serious strife is averted, because all love the common weal better than their personal ends.

"Brethren," the apostle continues, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This advice counsels mercy. While humility is the restraint which Christians place upon themselves, mercy is the impulse of love by which they rouse themselves to action. For Christian faith not only urges us to keep ourselves from doing what would be harmful, but also to perform that which is useful; it keeps us from breaking the law of Christ, and leads us to its fulfillment. Now to the flesh in Christians an erring brother is a loathsome object; it cannot bear with his error, and advises as the simplest way for getting rid of the fault of the brother to rid ourselves of the brother. The apostle argues that such a course would be unmerciful. The brother overtaken in a fault is a burden-bearer to his flesh, and his fellow-Christians owe him the kindness to consider that. They must bear the brother, even to the extent of bearing the brother's burden with him; for so Christ has borne with us. This does not mean that we may yield one iota of the moral righteousness of the Law; for we cannot break the Law by love. There is no limit set to the love of the brethren, except this, that our love shall not exceed the rule of Christ. However, it requires a fine spiritual insight to apply mercy and truth alike in every instance of infirmity among the brethren. As a help the apostle suggests that we reduce this teaching to the golden rule, and ask ourselves to inquire of our own heart: How wouldst thou have the brethren deal with thee if thou hadst been overtaken in a fault? The spirit of Christ will guide us into all truth and teach us to apply all his instructions.

Another test of the progress which the heart has made under grace is gratitude to our spiritual teachers. Accordingly, the apostle

know that Christ was as busy about His great work of redemption as you and I are about the works of our calling. He said: "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." And what did St. Paul mean when he urged the Ephesians to "redeem the time, because the days are evil"? Ponder that, beloved! The opportunities to do good which you have now are the best, and may be the last that you will have in your whole lives. You have the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments. You receive more teaching and spiritual attention than you have received in years past. God has sent you good weather for your souls; now is your great season to be up and doing, lest you shall have to say one day like the despairing Jews in Jeremiah's day: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Finally, the apostle lays stress on this, that our sowing to the Spirit must be a continuous effort, saying: "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." This work is exhausting, and Christians need encouragement therein. The comfort is not withheld; the apostle points to the harvest ahead. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The work is trying; the sacrifices which have to be made in this spiritual work are very painful; they oftentimes wring tears from the eyes. But it is in the midst of such tribulations and sorrows that the seed is ripening in our hearts, and God is calculating with glad satisfaction the rich sheaves which His angel reapers shall bring in, when He will send them over the field of the earth. Then "he that hath sown to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Amen.

Communion Address on Luke 18, 9—14.

The wisdom of God is foolishness unto the world. As long as a man presents an apparently blameless character, like the Pharisee in the text, men will call him blessed and respect him, but as soon as he publicly disgraces himself, like the publican in the text, men will shun him and cannot understand why God should graciously receive such a person. But the Savior judges differently, entirely the other way. His Word tells us that the publican was declared just in the sight of God, and the Pharisee not; for the publican the gates of heaven stood open, while the Pharisee had his face turned towards hell, though he hoped to get to heaven. Why was this so? The text gives the answer. For further instruction in the matter let me answer the question:

WHY WAS THE PUBLICAN PARDONED, AND NOT THE PHARISEE?

1. *Because the Pharisee did not believe;*
2. *Because the publican did believe.*

1.

The Pharisee was not justified, was not pardoned, because he did not believe. In a measure, this man had a belief, for there is not a man on earth that has not some kind of creed. This Pharisee was a member of a very strict and very religious Jewish sect. He should have known much about the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. In truth, he was not a blatant agnostic, a bold atheist, and a mocking infidel. He knew the true God of Israel, the eternal Jehovah. But that in itself could not save him. He went down to his house not justified. The devils know the one true God, and still they tremble. The belief in a god will not help any man into heaven. The pagans understand His eternal power and godhead, and yet St. Paul assures us that they are without hope and without God in this world. A man may have a religion, and at the same time be without the kingdom of heaven.

This Pharisee knew something about the duties and obligations of the people of God, and he observed them. The place to pray for the Jew was the temple, and there you find this Pharisee saying his prayers. As a faithful Israelite he fasted and gave his tithes for the maintenance of the temple and the support of its priesthood. He earnestly strove to lead a very exact life. He could truthfully say that he was not an extortioner, that he never overcharged anybody, that he was not unjust, nor an adulterer, and that he had not been as wicked as the publican who had come into the temple to pray. Not only did this Pharisee assert that he endeavored to shun the ways of sin, and that he lived according to the precepts of God, he even did more than the Law required of him. He fasted twice a week, whilst God required the Jews to fast only once a year. He gave the tenth part of his entire possessions, of his savings, and, perhaps, "of mint and anise and cumin," whereas God asked him to give but the tenth part of his earnings. He seemed to be holier than holiness itself. And Jesus does not say that this Pharisee was a liar and a hypocrite. He, undoubtedly, must have been a very honorable person, worthy of the regard of any man. We could only wish for a goodly number of such citizens. Their name is beyond reproach, in the judgment of men, and helps to build up the reputation of any community. Men of such caliber are rare among the children of this world.

Still, however much we may justly say to the praise and credit of this seemingly saintly Pharisee, the Savior, nevertheless, pro-

nounces him an unjust man, a man that was not justified in the sight of the all-seeing and ever righteous Judge. What was the matter with him? My answer may startle you, but yet it is true. He was an out and out unbeliever, even though he was a very religious man. There are two things, very essential, absolutely indispensable, which he did not believe: first, that he was a sinner, and secondly, that the only way of winning the favor of God was by means of His grace and the justification found in the wounds of Jesus. He was a poor blind man, even with all the knowledge of the Bible that he possibly had; he was godless, even though he seemed to pray to God; he was wicked beyond measure, even though he could enumerate certain of his righteousnesses; he was under the judgment, the condemnation, and wrath of God, even though men might have praised and honored him. He was in a sad condition. To his own harm he did not see that the seed of all sins, even the vilest and worst of sins, is found in the heart of every man. The simple truth of original sin was a hidden mystery to him. He did not understand what an awful fact sin is, that sin, every sin, beggars description, that sin, even the smallest of sins, is an insurrection and a rebellion of the heart against God, that sin turns from God, turns against God, takes up arms against God. Because he did not realize the awful immensity of sin, the redemption from sin, the rescue from an eternal perdition on account of sin, the necessity of a divine Savior to purchase from sin, all this did not seem credible to him. His prayer was not an act of worship, it was not even an extolling of his virtues, as he imagined, no, it was an unfolding of his wickedness. It proved that pride, mean low pride, the master sin of the devil, that steals into the heart more imperceptibly, and covers itself under more disguises, than any other sin, ruled his heart, was the bad blotch and blemish on all his good deeds, kept the Savior out of his heart, and proved his ruin. The Savior judges: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased."

Dear Christian friends, as you make your confession to-day and approach the Lord's Table, be warned by the example of this Pharisee! Do not look upon your past good deeds and calculate to a nicety how much you have to your credit, and then commit yourselves to rest, but look upon your past life, and weigh how much you have left undone and how imperfect even your brightest virtues were. Do not look with complacency on the good deeds that you have done, but look up to those high and unattainable perfections, that unspotted holiness of God, which you have fallen short of. Remember, if you come to front the everlasting God, and stand in the blinding and piercing light of His heart-searching judgments, your personal integrity, the dream of spotlessness and innocence,

vanishes into thin air. Your decencies, and your alms, and your kind words, and your church-goings, and your regularities, and your attachment to an orthodox church and correct creed, and your formulas of sound doctrine, and your best prayers,—what is all that in front of the blaze of the wrath to come? Be not blind to your sins and blind to your need of a Savior! If you are still impenitent, do not fall upon your knees and make confession—it would be downright hypocrisy; do not come to the Holy Supper—it would be to your greater damnation. For the welfare of your own soul I plead with you to stay away, if you do not see your unrighteousness and acknowledge not your sin and are not hungry for the forgiveness of your sins. Follow not the example of the deluded Pharisee, but follow that of the publican, who received the pardon of God because he believed.

2.

The publican, likewise, knew the true God. He also came to the temple to pray. And his short prayer, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" proves that he possessed that faith by which a sinner is justified.

First of all, his prayer is a frank and full confession of all his sins. He does not indeed make an attempt at the impossible task of enumerating, one by one, the sins weighing on his conscience; he mentions them all in one grand total, pleading guilty to that momentous accusation of the Law that he is a sinner. He does not merely mean to say that he has been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful, that he has grieved others by words and deeds, and that he has stolen, neglected, and wasted aught, and done other injury, but he means to acknowledge honestly with St. Paul: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing," and to admit his secret faults and birth-sin. He does not make the slightest attempt at hiding any of his faults, or cleansing them with the soap and sinner of bad excuses. He does not attribute his downfall to the unhappy circumstances and the surroundings, for which he was not to blame. He blames himself, and not others. The latter is such a common fault among men. When Adam was called to account, he blamed Eve, and when Eve was called to account, she blamed Satan. What a different attitude do we behold in the publican! He has not one good word to say for himself. As noble a virtue as is humility, and as noticeable as it is in his bearing, still he pleads not to be forgiven because he has humbled himself. That would have made his prayer non-effective in a moment.

The thought that most deeply affected him was not, that his sin proved injurious to him, nor that people talked about him, nor that he deserved eternal damnation, but that he had sinned against God, grieved Him, the Source of all blessings. He asks for mercy,

being firmly assured that if he receives not that, there will be no hope for his miserable soul. With David he would cry: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure! Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger!" His actions plainly showed the remorse he felt over his sins. He stood afar off, because he was ashamed of himself before his fellows, but more so before God, because he would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven. In his great anguish, he smote upon his breast, because it contained a contrite, a broken heart.

But he does not show the remorse of a Judas, who ended his life in despair. Although he acknowledges that he is a child of wrath, yet he believes that there is forgiveness with God, that He might be feared. God, he knew, would blot out all his transgressions, not in an arbitrary manner, not capriciously, but because of His grace that is in Christ Jesus. Even though this publican did not mention the name of Jesus in so many letters, he well knew that God is a God of wrath to the sinner without a Savior, and that there is no mercy save in Christ. How could he know that? The Mosaic law taught him that there is no forgiveness of sins except by the shedding of blood, and that the sacrificial lamb foreshadowed the offering of the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot, the Messiah, who was to be bruised for the iniquities of His people. In that Savior he must have believed, for there is no salvation in any other, and the text states that he went down to his house justified.

Dear communicants, follow the example of this publican! Admit that you are sinners in God's sight. Do not imagine that your sins are small and insignificant. No grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch, and so no sin is small, because it is perpetrated against an infinite and spotlessly pure God. Be not so deluded as to believe that your sins could not have such dire consequences as the sins of others. The scorpion is a little creature, yet it will sting a mighty lion to death. And so will every one of your sins, be they ever so small, mean death, temporal and eternal, if unpardoned. Let it be your sincere confession that you deserve God's punishment, and come to Him with a heart like that of the publican. Above all, gladly believe that Christ Jesus came to save that which is lost. If you should see nothing but evil in yourselves, believe that Christ has redeemed you with His blood. In Christ the thief upon the cross, the denying and crying Peter, and the beloved disciple John, are alike perfect, without blemish, through the blood of Christ; they all have the same righteousness. He is offering you His unbounded grace to-day in the absolution and in the Supper of His body and blood. Fear not, only believe! And as you believe, so shall it be unto you. Amen.

OTTO C. A. BOECLER.

Funeral Address on Hos. 6, 1.

Who knows how near my end may be?
 Time speeds away, and death comes on;
 How swiftly, ah! how suddenly,
 May death be here and life be gone!
 My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
 Thy peace may bless my dying day.

Without doubt, the truth and the petition contained in this stanza came involuntarily to the mind of most of us as we heard of the sudden departure of our mutual friend and beloved brother in Christ. Ah me! it was a hard blow, a terrible shock; we realize that. How unsearchable are the judgments of the Lord, and His ways past finding out! Who could say with unfailing certainty: The Lord had such and such plans at the death of our brother? Verily, His judgments, in this instance, are again quite contrary to our wisest calculations and expectations. Here is a minister of Christ, a steward of the mysteries of God, to all appearances in the best of health only a few days ago, full well able to labor on for some time in the Lord's vineyard, in the seasoned vigor of manhood, experienced in the duties of his holy calling during more than a score of years of uninterrupted service, intimately acquainted with the various spiritual needs and wants of his numerous parishioners, attached to them with a love that has grown warm and strong in the trials and tribulations, joys and sorrows which a pastor and his parish must always divide between themselves. And now the bonds of love have been torn asunder by the cold and unfeeling hand of death. The congregation is without a shepherd, without a true and devoted spiritual leader.—The family, the widow with her children, must now forego the pleasure of companionship and advice of a trusty support. We know, how valuable a God-fearing father is to his children, how sorely they are in need of his surveillance and counsel, especially when blooming into manhood and womanhood.—We, his fellow-laborers in the Lord, are sorry to miss him in our conference; his services were needed and were always cheerfully granted. We are aware that vacancies in the ranks of the Lord's laborers present vexing and embarrassing problems, since there is such a great dearth of pastors and teachers.—There is sadness in our midst to-day. But we know the fountain, ever flowing, flowing with the mercy and grace of God. The words of our text will cheer us; from them we learn:

HOW THE HOLY PROPHET EXHORTS HIS PEOPLE IN THEIR DISTRESS.

1. *He reminds them of their transgressions;*
2. *He recalls the past mercies of God;*
3. *He assures them of God's mercy in the present.*

1.

The Lord's hand was heavy upon His people Israel as He was forced to declare in His wrath: "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness." And how does the prophet, who spoke these words of thunder in the name of the Lord, exhort his people in their distress? He reminds them of their sins. He says: "Return!" He would remind them of their waywardness, that they were prodigals. The holy seer admits that the Lord has chastened him and his people, that He has "torn" and "smitten." But they have no reason whatsoever to murmur and be dissatisfied, as if the Lord had been dealing unjustly with them. No, no; they should rather humbly acknowledge that they have provoked Him and richly earned His chastisement.

Beloved, we are wayward sons and daughters as well, "for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." God has here struck a heavy blow. We feel it keenly. All the more keenly do we feel it because it is that Lord who has bought us, one and all, from sin, death, and hell with a price, the blood of His Son. We have given cause and deserved it. Come, let us return unto the Lord and admit it with tearful eyes and broken hearts.

Dear fellow-Christians and members of this congregation, I am persuaded that you will say: We have not always so loved God's pure Word and Sacrament as we should have prized them; we have not always listened to Christ's Gospel with rapture and longing as we should have done, when those lips, now cold in death, preached it to us; we have been sorely lacking in our thankfulness for these blessings. And the sorrowing relatives will say: Yea, dear heavenly Father, we did not always duly consider how much a good spouse and true parent is worth; but now, with bitter remorse in our hearts, we feel how lonely we are, for how much we failed to thank Thee. And Christians elsewhere will admit: We learn again at the death of an ambassador of Jesus Christ that we too seldom and too faintly return our heartfelt thanks to the Lord for such precious gifts as are the Lord's ministers, that we are too blind and too slothful to weigh rightly these exceedingly great mercies of God. And if we thus examine the innermost recesses of our sinful hearts, we will not murmur and grumble because the Lord has chastened us. Bearing in mind that we are only what God's grace has made of us, we will in full resignation bow to the will of God and free our souls from the grievous bondage of our own imaginations, humbly admit the justice of His sore visitations, and rejoice as long as He grants us but the one privilege of being partakers of His grace in Christ Jesus.

2.

In exhorting his people in their distress, Hosea also recalls the past mercies of God. He had said: "When Ephraim saw his sick-

ness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Israel's ailment was too malignant. A physician like Assyria could afford no help. But there was one who could. The prophet says: "Come, let us return unto the Lord!" Why? Ah! the Lord has been merciful in the past; He has so often received His obstinate children and forgiven their sins.

And that is what we should remember to-day: that the Lord has ever been kind to us, and that we should not forget His benefits when the storms of adversity are running high. The members of this congregation must acknowledge mercies without number. For twenty-five years you have heard God's Word from the lips of your departed pastor. He has shown you the way to eternal life through Christ Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In his own quiet and calm way he has directed the affairs of your congregation. You were always sure that you could depend on him, that he would do his duty. In these long years of service in your midst you never knew him to falter in his loyalty to you, nor waver in his devotion, nor grow colder in his love. And never did he express any dissatisfaction at the treatment he was receiving from you,—I never heard him complain,—for he fed the flock of God not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. He undoubtedly strove to live according to the divine injunction: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good ministers of the manifold grace of God." As a feeble instrument in God's hands, as a poor sinful being, he humbly filled his appointed place and discharged his divinely-assigned duties. You are unable to deny it, dear friends, that God has highly favored you in this your sainted pastor. No bags of gold, no tokens of love, no memorials of devotion, no tears of gratitude, no hymns of praise, could ever repay God's endless mercies which you have received through the faithful ministrations of the one who can no longer serve you. And to his sharpest critics I would say there are only a few model preachers, and the only perfect and sinless model preacher was nailed to a cross.

Our brother's end came, indeed, very suddenly. He could only nod his assent when asked whether he would die in the faith of his Redeemer. There is a drop of bitterness in that, for parting words and affectionate caresses as a last farewell are quite a consolation to the bereaved ones. But if we look back upon his life, we find ample reason to thank God for the manner in which He received him into glory. He believed what he preached. He did not only point others to the bleeding Savior, but himself embraced Him as his only hope in life and death. And he that lives in Christ dies in Christ, no matter how, when, or where death may overtake him,

for not even death shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. And when did death claim him? When in the name of God's peculiar people and holy nation and in the person of Christ he was performing the functions of his holy office. He died at his post, just as, through the sacrament of Holy Baptism which he was administering, another sinner had been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, after he had preached to you that morning on the gospel of the Good Shepherd. In Christ, whom he preached and confessed, he has conquered death and joined the gathering of saints and angels above. His death was his going home to the Father, the ending of warfare, the removing of temptation, the ceasing of failure. No unfaithfulness, no miserable weakness, no grieving of God, no sin, will evermore trouble his soul. He says to you:

Weep not, my friends, weep not for me,

All is well;

My sins are pardoned, I am free;

All is well.

There's not a cloud that doth arise

To hide my Savior from mine eyes;

I now have reached the upper skies —

All is well.

3.

Finally, the holy prophet assures his people of God's mercy in the present. He has torn, but He will heal again; He has smitten, but He will again bind them up. And in the words immediately following our text Hosea gives his people double certainty that God will have compassion, in the beautiful words: "After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Such words fill our hearts with comfort for the future. If we submit humbly to His will, we have the promise: "God giveth grace to the humble." I would remind you, the weeping widow of the deceased, that the Lord is ever mindful of His own. When life is filled with sunshine, it is easy to realize that God cares, but when we walk alone under the dreary clouds of great sorrow and misfortune, we sometimes fail to remember that God is nearer still. Naomi buried her husband and sons in the land of Moab, but she found there a dear daughter-in-law, Ruth, who became the ancestress of Shiloh, the promised Christ. And so the Lord, your Savior, will surely guide your steps after He has removed the faithful spouse from your side. Remember in your grief that the hard way is always good, if it is God's way. And as the walls of our castles crumble, God will rear the mountains of His everlasting protection and help.

—And to the members of this congregation I would say: As it was the Lord's work which He has done in past days through the instrumentality of your departed pastor, He certainly will not suffer His handiwork to go to ruin at this place. Trust in Him, commit your ways unto Him, and He will bring it to pass. Pray fervently that He may soon come to your assistance and replace the loss which you have sustained.

In conclusion, I would put a question to all of you: Should not this death bring us to our senses and recall the undeniable fact that we never know when death may overtake us? It is folly to talk or live as though we were going to have time, later, to make better preparations for a blessed end than we have hitherto made. But many of those who call themselves Christians, as well as many of those who do not, often take this desperate chance. In the meantime, all of us live hourly in the midst of death; we can all say with David, "As thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death." A true servant of God always looks forward to the meeting with God and is prepared at all times; having realized his own need for repentance, he has repented, and daily repents; with a growing, deepening sorrow he has searched out his sins; he has taken them to the foot of the cross, and has left them there. The thought of God's love in Christ brightens all to him; humbly and trustingly he daily awaits the call home. Let us, therefore, one and all, surrender unconditionally to the only conqueror that death has ever acknowledged, Jesus Christ, the Vanquisher of death. If we live in the faith of this Savior, death will be but an incident in our life, and will usher us into eternal life with the song of triumph on our lips:

Hail, hail, all hail, ye blood-washed throng,
 Saved by grace;
 I've come to join your rapturous song,
 Saved by grace.

All, all is peace and joy divine,
 All heav'n and glory now are mine;
 Oh, hallelujah to the Lamb!
 All is well!

Amen.

OTTO C. A. BOECLER.

Prayers for Mission Festival.

1.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, who by Thy precious blood didst purchase all men to be Thine own, and didst command Thy Gospel to be preached to all nations, we beseech Thee, make us sincerely willing to assist in the accomplishment of this object. Enable us to obey Thy command, that we may be zealous in

Thy work. Make us to rejoice in the abundance of Thy grace. Let Thy Holy Spirit give us full assurance of our salvation, which we have by faith in Thy perfect merit, that we may heartily thank Thee for the same and manifest our unfeigned gratitude in sincere compassion with the utter wretchedness of all who do not know Thee, and in fervent zeal to help them by the preaching of the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. O Lord, our Savior, have mercy upon us and bless us. Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it! Amen.

(*Wisconsin Agenda.*)

2.

We beseech Thee, O heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord, that Thou wouldst have mercy upon all unbelievers, whoever and wherever they may be, and who still walk in darkness without the light of Thy Gospel. Satan has blinded and their foolish heart darkened them. They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and carried away unto dumb idols even as they are led, and because of the blindness of their hearts they curse and blaspheme Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, the mercy-seat. Therefore, O Thou faithful God, remove the veil which until this day remaineth untaken away upon the hearts of the Jews, who stumble at the stumbling-stone and at the rock of offense. Enlighten their eyes, that they may know the true Messiah, the Savior of the world. The heathen and all unbelievers, who regard Thy Word as foolishness, do Thou bring into the true fold and congregation of Christians, the communion of saints, that together with us and all believers they may honor, praise, and worship Thee, the Father in the Son, and the Son together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one true God and Lord. Open the understanding of all men, who do not rest their salvation and hope solely on the true foundation and corner-stone, Christ Jesus, that they may know Him whom Thou hast sent, and with right faith and true confidence of heart accept Him as their Savior and Redeemer, who by His obedience and fulfillment of the Law through His bitter death hath obtained eternal redemption. May it please Thee also to bring back to the eternal truth of Thy Word all those who have departed from the Christian faith or err in certain doctrines and are tainted with heresy. O God of all grace, have mercy upon those who are not of the right faith, who sit in the shadow of death and in the darkness of their minds walk upon crooked paths. Seek the lost, bring back the erring, open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, let the tongues of the mute who do not confess Thee speak plainly, raise the fallen, restore the straying and deluded, gather the scattered, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

(*Grosser Gebetsschatz*, p. 181.)

(Collected and translated by *Dr. C. A. Abbetmeyer.*)